In the Name of Allâh, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful

How Do We Know What Is and What Is Not a Bid`ah?

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This is a very important point which when discussed clarifies detailed principles under the light of which an action can be known as to whether it is a bid'ah or not. "This is because Allaah, the Blessed and Exalted, will not accept an action until two conditions are fulfilled:

1. That it be done sincerely seeking the Face of Allaah, Azza wa Jalla.
2. That it be righteous, and it cannot be righteous until it is in conformity to the Sunnah, not in contradiction to it."

['Hujjah an-Nabee' (pg. 100) of our Shaykh al-Albaanee, may Allaah preserve him. I say and it was upon these two principles that Shaykh al-Islaam ibn Taymiyyah based his superb book 'al-Uboodiyyah' on.]

Our Shaykh, al-Albaanee, may Allaah preserve him, said in his book 'Ahkaam al-Janaa'iz' (pg. 242),

"Indeed the bid'ah which the Sharee'ah has textually stated to be misguidance is (of a number of types):

1. Everything that contradicts the Sunnah, be it in actions, sayings or beliefs even if this arise out of ijtihaad."

I say: as-Suyutee said in 'al-Amr bi al-Ittibaa' (pp. 92-93),

"This differs in accordance to the different circumstances and to the extent in which it contradicts the Sharee'ah. Sometimes this leads to that which would necessitate forbiddance and sometimes it does not exceed the bounds of detestability. It is possible for every skilled legal jurist to differentiate between the two types especially if he has deep-rooted knowledge and faith.

[FN. Rather all innovations in the religion are forbidden].

This category of vile innovation is sub-divided into two:

a. In matters of belief that lead towards misguidance and loss.

   The adherents to the deviated sects are of six types, and each type is further divided into 12 sects - this making the 72 sects about which the Prophet (SAW) informed would be in the Fire. We are not, at this juncture, going to detail them but the one who sticks to the Sunnah and the Jamaa'ah and steers clear of the foundations and offshoots of these innovations will be from the Saved Sect by the Permission of Allaah.

b. In the actions and these are further sub-divided into two:

i. The type that is known by everyone, the elite and the general masses, to be a bid'ah, be it forbidden or detested.
ii. The type that the majority think to be actions of worship and means of drawing close to Allaah and a Sunnah.

So from the first type [i.e. (i)] is what a group of the ignoramuses fell into - those that left following the Imaams of the Religion - those who belong to Faqr whose reality is to be impoverished of faith by befriending women and being alone with them.

This is forbidden by the agreement of the Muslims and the one who considers this to be lawful is a disbeliever. The one who does this, considering it of little importance is a sinner, misguided and misguiding, having deserted the religion and split off from the Jamaa'ah of the Muslim - may Allaah distance the one who does it - for indeed looking at women who are haraam for him to look at and being alone with them and listening to their words is haraam upon every mature person unless he be of the ties of kinship. Haraam according to the Book, the Sunnah and the consensus of the Muslims.

This is not the place to detail the evidences concerning this, rather the purpose is to clarify what constitutes bid'ah and what constitutes evidence and this is not hidden from a Muslim."

Then he said (pg. 153),

"As for the second type that people think to be obedience to Allaah and a means of drawing close to Him while it is not so, or leaving it is better then enacting it - then this is what the Legislator has commanded to be done in a specific form, at a specific time or in a specific place. Examples of this would be fasting during the day and circumambulating the Ka'bah. Or what has been ordered to a specific person such as the things specific to the Prophet (SAW) such that the ignoramus would find analogy with himself and thereby do them while being forbidden from doing them, or he makes analogy between one form of worship to another while not taking into consideration time and place."

Then our Shaykh said,

2. "Every matter by which nearness to Allaah is sought but the Messenger of Allaah (SAW) has forbidden."

   I say: such as fasting continuously, or specifying the day of Jumu'ah for fasting or praying the night and the likes of these. This is because in and of themselves they are matters which draw one close to Allaah from the point of view that the basis of them is worship but they do not draw one close to Allaah due to their being done in this forbidden way.

   As-Suyutee said in 'al-Amr bi al-Ittibaa' (pg. 152) while mentioning bid'ah,

   "… And this occurs in some of them due to their desire to perform a great deal of worship and actions of obedience, so their desire leads them to do this at times and in places that the Sharee'ah has forbidden them from doing so.

   From these are those that are forbidden and those that are disliked. Ignorance and the adornment of Shaytaan puts these people in a dilemma by them saying: These are actions of obedience, it is established that they were done at other times so we shall do them continuously, for Allaah will never punish us for actions of obedience irregardless of when we perform them!"

   Then our Shaykh said,

3. "Every matter for which it is not possible to be legislated except by a text and there is no text for it then this is a bid'ah with the exception of that which is reported from a Companion from whom that action was repeatedly done with no one objecting."

   I say: Abu Sulaymaan ad-Daaraane said,

   "It is not upon the one receives inspiration (ilhaam) that something is from the good actions to enact it until he hears it from a text. So when he hears it from a text he should enact it and praise Allaah for making what is in his heart conform to

the text."

['al-Baa'ith' (pg. 108) of Abu Shaamah.]

And there was nothing said that was more beautiful than the saying of al-Imaam Ibraaheem an-Nakha'ee,

"If the Companions had wiped over their finger nails then I would not have washed them due to the great virtue of following them"

['al-Ibaanah' (no.254) of ibn Battah. A similar narration was reported by ad-Daarimee in his 'Sunan' (1/72)]

Ibn Abee ad-Dunya reports in 'Kitaab al-Iyaal' (no.56) that Ataa said,

"I asked Aa'ishah about aqueeqah saying, 'what is your opinion of the one who sacrifices a slaughter camel?' She replied, "the Sunnah is better and more excellent."

I say: And what is their that is better to be followed!!

Taqee as-Subkee was asked in his 'Fataawaa' (2/549) about a newly invented matter that was performed by some of his contemporaries to which he replied,

"All praise is due to Allaah. This is a bid'ah without any doubt and none should have any doubt concerning this. It is sufficient to state that it was not known in the time of the Prophet (SAW) and neither in the time of the Sahaabah, and it is not known from any of scholars of the Salaf."

These are golden words that cement what has preceded that the Sharee'ah is sufficient and complete and that the right of legislation belongs to Allaah. It is not permissible to overstep its limits or to invent new things in it.

From the examples of this is what al-Haakim says in his 'Mustadrak' (1/370) adding a comment to the hadeeth that is reported concerning the prohibition of writing in graves [the basis of which is in 'Saheeh Muslim' (no. 970)],

"This hadeeth is not to be acted upon! For indeed the Imaams of the Muslims from the east to the west have words written on their graves, this being an action that the khalaf took from the Salaf!"

Adh-Dhahabee followed this statement up by correcting it and saying,

"What you say is of no consequence! We do not know of a single companion who did this rather it is something that was introduced by some of the taabi'een and those who came after them because the prohibition did not reach them."

A detailed discussion concerning this follows later.

Then our Shaykh said,

4. "Those things that are taken as worship but are actually from the habits of the disbelievers."

I say: as-Suyutee says in 'al-Amr bi al-Ittibaa' (pg. 141),

"And from the bid'ahs and evil actions is resembling the disbelievers and joining in with and agreeing to their Eids and accursed festivities as is done by many of the ignorant Muslims…"

Shaykh al-Islaam ibn Taymiyyah says in 'Iqtidaa as-Siraat al-Mustaqeem' (pg. 214),

"The generality of these actions that are taken from the Christians and others that

are not reported (in our Religion) - then Satan has adorned them and made them seem attractive to those that claim Islaam and he has made their hearts accept them and have a good opinion of them. So these (Muslims) have added to some and taken away from others, they have put some forward and delayed others just as they used to change some aspects of the True Religion. But due to these days and their likes having been specified while the Sharee'ah has not done so, and that making them special in the Religion is false and invalid rather the basis of their being special comes from the religion of the disbelievers, then this specification is actually resembling them.

And it is not possible that some ignoramus think that by changing these aspects that they have derived from the disbelievers they have succeeded in opposing them as occurred in the case of fasting on the Day of Ashura. This is because the basis of this fast was legislated for us and they used to perform it but the form of our fast differs from theirs. As for that which is in no way part of our Religion, rather it is from their innovated, abrogated religion then it is not for us to resemble it - neither in its basis nor its description."

I say: One of the clearest examples of this that has been invented in the past by many ignorant Muslims is the yearly celebration of the Mawlid of the Messenger (SAW). In this they are resembling the Jews and Christians who do the likes of these celebrations in their Eids and festive seasons!!

I have refuted the doubts that these people raise in my introduction to the book, 'al-Mawrid fee Amal al-Mawlid' by Taaj al-Faakihaanee and all praise is due to Allaah.

Then our Shaykh says:

5. "What some of the scholars, especially the later ones, have textually stated to be recommended while there is no evidence for this."

   I say: Unfortunately the examples of this are abundant.

   From them is what an-Nawawee, may Allaah have mercy upon him, quotes from Abu al-Hasan al-Qazwaynee in 'al-Adhkaar' (pg. 276) that he said,

   "It is recommended for the one on a journey recite **'li Eelaafi Quraysh'** because it would safeguard him from every evil"!

   And an-Nawawee endorsed this!!

   Our Shaykh, al-Allaamah al-Albaanee followed this up in 'Silsilah ad-Da'eefah' (1/374) by saying,

   "This is legislating something in the Religion for which there is no evidence apart from mere claim, so from where does he get that this would secure him from every evil?! Indeed these sort of opinions for which nothing occurs in the Book or the Sunnah would have been from the means of changing this Religion via ways that are not known had Allaah not Promised to safeguard it."

   As-Sakhaawee said in 'Ibtihaaj bi Adhkaar al-Musaafir wa al-Haaj' (pg. 17),

   "I have not come across a hadeeth concerning this."

   Then our Shaykh says:

6. "Every action of worship whose manner of performance has only come via a weak or fabricated hadeeth."

   I say: He also said in 'Hajjah an-Nabee' (pg. 102) while numbering the difference aspects of bid'ah,

   "It is not permissible to depend upon weak ahaadeeth or to attribute them to the

Prophet (SAW) and in our opinion it is not permissible to act upon such ahaadeeth. This is the opinion of a group of the scholars such as ibn Taymiyyah and others…

As for the ahaadeeth that are fabricated or have no basis then this fact about them was not known by some of the legal jurists and hence they based legal rulings upon them! These are from the core of bid'ah and newly invented matters."

An example of this is the 'Salaah ar-Raghaa'ib' which is prayed on the first Friday of Rajab. As-Suyutee says in 'al-Amr bi al-Ittibaa' (pg. 166),

"Know, may Allaah have mercy upon you, that exalting this day and night as invented in Islaam after the 4th century, and the hadeeth concerning it is fabricated by agreement of the scholars. The contents of this hadeeth concern the excellence of fasting on that day and praying during that night and they have called it 'Salaah ar-Raghaa'ib'!

As for what the researching scholars are upon - then it is to forbid the singling out of this day for fasting and to forbid praying during the night with this invented prayer and from everything that would contain exaltation of this day such as feasts and displaying adornments etc. with the purpose that this day become of the same level as others (normal) days."

[Refer to: 'Iqtidaa as-Siraat al-Mustaqeem' (pg.283), 'al-Fataawaa al-Kubraa' (1/177), 'al-Baa'ith' (pg. 39), 'Tabyeen al-Ajab' (pg.47), 'al-Madhkal' (1/293), 'Masaajilah Ilmiyyah' of ibn Salaah and al-Izz bin Abd as-Salaam. Refer also to 'al-Mawdoo'aat' (2/124) and 'al-Laa'ee al-Masnoo'ah' (2/57).]

Then our Shaykh said:

7. "Going to excesses in worship."

I say: Allaah censured the disbelievers for their extremism in their religion by saying, **"O People of the Book! Do not go to extremes in your religion and do not say about Allaah except the truth."** (4/171)

The Messenger of Allaah (SAW) warned from this by saying,

"I warn you of extremism in the Religion for indeed those that came before you were destroyed due to their extremism in the religion."

[Reported by an-Nasaa'ee (5/268), ibn Maajah (no. 3029), Ahmad (1/215, 347) with a saheeh sanad.]

Shaykh al-Islaam ibn Taymiyyah says in 'Iqtidaa Siraat al-Mustaqeem' (1/72),

"Furthermore going to excesses with regards to the Prophets and righteous has occurred amongst some groups of the worshippers and sufis to the extent that many of these intermingled this with the belief of incarnation and ittihaad that ended being more vile than the saying of the Christians or sometimes similar to it or sometimes stopping short of it."

All of this falls under the meaning of going to excesses in worship.

The meaning of excess (gulu) is to transgress the proper bounds. From the examples of this excess is what some people say in praise of the Prophet (SAW):

Indeed the delight and harm of the world is yours to bestow

From your knowledge is the knowledge of the Preserved Tablet and Pen

Can there be any excess more extreme then this?!

Imaam ash-Shaatibee said in 'al-Muwaafaqaat' (2/242),

"In the time frames set by the legislator for the employment of the actions of

worship, the obligatory and recommendations, to certain known times for apparent or not so apparent reasons lies enough to cause certainty that the reason behind the legislation is to keep the actions ongoing and constant.

It is said concerning the saying of Allaah, **"they did not observe it in the way they should have done"**[57:27] that indeed the lack of their observing it lay in their abandoning it after starting it and continuing in it (for a short time.)

At this juncture we can derive a ruling for what the Sufis have committed themselves to with regards to performing certain rituals and statements of dhikr (wird) at certain set times…."

I say: at this point is would be good to mention the book published by al-Luknawee Abu al-Hasanaat, 'Iqaamah al-Hujjah alaa anna al-Ikthaar min at-Ta'bbud Laysa bi Bid'ah.' He declares to be good what has been reported from some of the scholars and Imaams with regards to exerting oneself to the utmost in worship such as staying up the whole night for prayer, or reciting the whole Qur'aan in one rak'ah, or performing 1000 rak'ahs!

The vast majority of these narrations are reported by isnaads that cannot be depended upon! So are these quotes from the actions legislated by the Sharee'ah or from the newly invented innovations?!

I say: there is no doubt in the eyes of one who understands the meaning of Sunnah and the correct meaning of Bid'ah, and whose heart has adorned for him the continuous following of the Sunnah and made ugly the following of bid'ah that these ways and mannerisms and setting of limits are all in opposition to the Sunnah of the Prophet (SAW), in fact falling into that which has been forbidden from - going to excesses in the religion and despicable innovation.

Imaam adh-Dhahabee says in his amazing book 'Siyar al-A'laam an-Nubalaa' (3/84-86) after mentioning the saying of the Prophet (SAW) to Abdullaah bin Umru, *"…then recite the Qur'aan in seven days and do not go beyond this."*

[Reported by Muslim]

"It is authentically reported from the Messenger of Allaah (SAW) that this was reduced to 3 nights and he forbade that the Qur'aan be recited in less than this.

[Reported by Abu Dawood (no. 1394), at-Tirmidhee (no. 2950), ibn Maajah (no. 1347), al-Baghawee (4/498) from Abdullaah bin Umru that the Prophet (SAW) said, *"the person who recites the Qur'aan in less than three (nights) has not understood it."*]

This was in regards to the amount of Qur'aan that had thusfar been revealed, and then after this saying of the Prophet (SAW) the remainder of the Qur'aan was revealed. The least level of the meaning of prohibition is that it is reprehensible to recite the whole Qur'aan in less than three nights. There is no understanding or contemplation on the part of one who recites it in less than three nights. If it was read and recited in a week and this was done constantly then this would be an excellent action and the religion would be easy.

By Allaah reciting one seventh of the Qur'aan during tahajjud, alongwith preserving the prescribed supererogatory prayers, and the prayer of Duhaa and the prayer of entering the Mosque, alongwith preserving the remembrances which are authentically reported, the supplications upon sleeping and waking and at the ends of the prescribed prayers and opening the fast, alongwith learning beneficial knowledge and busying oneself with it sincerely for the sake of Allaah, alongwith enjoining the good and forbidding the evil, guiding the ignorant and teaching him, reprimanding the sinner and similar things, alongwith performing the obligatory actions and staying away from the major sins, being frequent in supplication and

seeking forgiveness and giving charity, joining the ties of kinship, humility, and sincerity in all of what has been mentioned - indeed of all this is a great activity. This is the station of the People of the Right and the God-fearing Awliyaah of Allaah, for all of what has been mentioned is desired.

Therefore when the servant busies himself with trying to finish the whole Qur'aan in one night, the he has opposed the Upright Religion and becomes unable to do much of what we have mentioned and he has not contemplated what he has recited.

Here is the master, the servant, the Companion who used to say when he grew old, "woe to me if only I had accepted the leeway given by the Messenger of Allaah (SAW)"

[As is reported by Bukhaaree]

This because it was said to him by the Prophet (SAW) concerning the optional fast, he kept on reducing (the time between fasts) to the point that he said, *"fast one day and break fast one day, this is the fast of my brother Dawood (AS)."*

[The same hadeeth as above]

And he (SAW) ordered that part of the night should be slept in by saying, *"but I pray the night and I sleep, I fast and I break the fast, I marry women and I eat meat, therefore the one who turns away from my Sunnah is not of me."*

[Reported by Bukhaaree and Muslim].

May Allaah inspire us and you to follow in the best of ways and make us to keep away from desires and opposing (the Sunnah)."

Then our Shaykh said:

8. "Every action of worship that the Sharee'ah has generalised but the people have put some restrictions to it such as a specific place, time, description or number."

   I say: Imaam Abu Shaamah said in 'al-Baa'ith' (pg. 165),

   "It is not permissible to specify an action of worship to a time that has not been specified by the Sharee'ah, rather all the actions of righteousness are applicable to all times, there is no specific time that is better than another with the exception of what the Sharee'ah has declared to be so such as fasting the day of Arafah and Aashurah, praying in the depth of the night and performing Umrah in Ramadaan.

   And from the places are those that the Sharee'ah has declared to be better to perform actions of worship in such as the 10 days of Dhu al-Hajjah, Laylatul Qadr which is better than a thousand months…

   In summary: it is not upon the servant to specify rather this is for the Legislator (SAW), and this was the description of the worship of the Messenger of Allaah (SAW)"

   [Refer to 'Iqtidaa' (pg. 308-309)]

   And the scholars, the dead and the living, have established the principle that "what the Legislator (SAW) has generalised is to be acted upon in its general way and it is not permissible to restrict it or limit it."

   ['al-Ikhtiyaaraat al-Ilmiyyah li Shaykh al-Islaam ibn Taymiyyah' (pg. 73) of al-Ba'lee]

   I say: ibn al-Qayyim said in 'Igaatha al-Lufhaan' (pg. 371),

   "…And from these is that the Sunnah has declared to be reprehensible is the singling out of Rajab and Jumu'ah for fasting so that this may not be taken as a

means of innovating in the religion by way of specifying a time that the Sharee'ah has not specified for worship."

Our Shaykh said in 'Hajjah an-Nabee (SAW) (pg. 103),

9. "Habits and superstitions that have no proof in the Sharee'ah, and neither does the intellect testify to them even if some ignoramuses may enact them making them to be part of their legislated law and even if there be some people present who aid them in this having a claim to knowledge."

I say: the examples of this are too many to enumerate, this depicts the condition of many of the children of this time who are following their desires and the way of the Khalaf. So upon this "it is not permissible to depart from the way of the Salaf for it is the best and most complete of ways."

['Ikhtiyaaraat al-Ilmiyyah' (pg. 54) of ibn Taymiyyah].

It is necessary to distance oneself from those who oppose the salaf for it is the most misguided and ignorant.